

RUNNING HEAD: Title: Avoiding the Dissertation Syndrome: Reflections from "New Docs"

Abstract:

From the reflective experiences shared by participants in focus groups at GERA and informal settings, the relevance the conceptual factors related to the completion of doctoral students seems to be a consistent matter. The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) has posted research based and reflective information related to Graduate Schools attempts to address these pressing issues of doctoral degree completion ("Chapter 3: What University Administrators Can Do to Improve Completion Rates" Retrieved from www.gsnet.org). The voices of doctoral degree attendees and recent graduates should be centrifugal in the development of a symposium on the dissertation syndrome (2011). As a result the foci for this symposium will be to hear the voices of recent completers of a doctoral program and review results from a soon to be defended case study on faculty engagement and academic scholarship as factors in the relationship between doctoral candidates and faculty. Additionally, the attendees will be offered a survey based upon the theory of the dissertation syndrome.

Research Objectives/Purpose:

The purpose of this research is to utilize the dissertation syndrome conceptual theory posited by Moffett (2010) and presented by Moffett, Brownlee-Williams, Frizzell and Shipman (2011) at the 36th GERA Conference. The objectives include the following:

- to utilize the narrative reflections from doctoral students who have matriculated through a doctoral program in education with a minimum of 0-15 (first quarter); 16-30 (second quarter); 31-45 (third quarter); 46-60 (fourth quarter) credit hours
- to review the dissertation related concerns from the participants at the 2014 dissertation syndrome symposium (DSS)
- to solicit reflective comments and updates from returning participants compared with time participants at the 2014 DSS
- to record updates from doctoral students who have completed the process in 2013 and 2014
- to listen to research topic selection concerns, review of literature concerns, methodology concerns, and prospectus preparation concerns, findings and reflections

Perspective or Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework seeks to qualitatively utilize the factors developed by Moffett 2006 and presented by Moffett and selected doctoral research participants at GERA (2013) as independent and dependent variables aligned with the theory of the four quarters of matriculation through the doctoral experience. The questions that undergird the theory of the variables are as follows:

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Is there a relationship between the DSS variables for the dissertation syndrome and the narrative reflections of participants engaged in the dissertation process and the researcher advisor for the dissertation process?

Methods, Techniques, Mode of Inquiry:

The methodology is designed around the conceptual model introduced at GERA for DSS I in 2011. The theory of the variables conceptualized by the researcher and research participants emerged from reflections in the real setting designed by the researcher for doctoral methods in research class settings. The qualitative conceptual context shall seek to obtain the lived experiences of participants of recent completers of the dissertation process and those matriculating through the dissertation process.

RQ1: Are you in the first, second, third or fourth quarter of matriculation?

RQ2: What is your research topic and have you developed essential questions to support your review of literature on your topic selection?

RQ3: Have any of the participants selected a committee, prepared prospectus and/or presented prospectus?

RQ4: Have any of the participants passed prospectus and are presently collecting data for analysis, collected data for analysis, begun to write the chapter for data analysis?

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RQ5: Have any of the participants have submitted drafts of the dissertation to an advisor/committee for review and approval?

RQ6: Has anyone reached the stage dissertation defense date and/or presentation of defense as of the date of the DSS II (returned attendees from 2011 and new participants from 2012)?

RG7: How do you rate the dissertation process, using the instrument designed and shared at the GERA Conference?

Data Sources, Evidence, Materials:

Preliminary findings from the researcher reflections on teaching, advising, and supporting dissertation candidates' observations, and documented reflections of selected doctoral candidates who have matriculated in selected courses with the researcher: selected literature related to dissertation problems that have been identified and measured through quantitative or qualitative methods and the results from the interactive participation between the presenters of DSS I at GERA in 2011 and the data collected from selected doctoral students who completed their dissertation journey between 2013-2014

Results/Conclusions:

Doctoral students' motivation and level of commitment/focus may possibly determine the extent which the human being within an educational program leading to a doctoral degree may complete the dissertation. Additionally, the action research on the phenomena as theorized by

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Moffett (2006), Moffett (2010), Moffett, Brownlee-Williams, Frizzell, Shipman (2011) serves as the background to the problem in cited for the theory of the dissertation syndrome. The results are deconstructed through the lens of the lived experiences and interactive discussions emerging from participation at dissertation syndrome workshops by recent completers and advisors.

Through engagement with the target audience, the researcher and researcher- presenters seek to extrapolate answers to the selected research questions.

Target Audience:

The target audience will be graduate students currently enrolled in degree programs leading to a doctorate degree primarily in an education related field. However, recent completers and advisors are encouraged to participate in the symposium. It is an anticipated outcome for the target audience that their participation may produce evidence that numerous factors, such as, finances, job related duties, personal obligations, family commitments, identification of a faculty mentor/colleague mentor, physical health and other unidentified causal factors shared by the target audience coupled with the level of the students' motivation directly or indirectly impact students' timeline for completion.

Proposed/Anticipated Significance:

Participants should review the theory related to the dissertation syndrome through interpersonal reflections, a review of the findings from 2011 attendees, a comparison of the lived experience matriculation through the dissertation process with the factors presented by the research presenters and DSS II. It is problemitized (Moffett 2006) that the significance should promote a framework for diagnosis by doctoral candidates at various stages, program matriculation and dissertation defense.

Selected References

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